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ABSTRACT

A project was conducted in Pennsylvania to conduct a statewide staff development project on adults with learning differences using the following delivery systems: initial training sessions; advanced training sessions; videotapes of training sessions; the "Learning disAbilities Newsletter"; printed material from the Center for Alternative Learning in Havertown, Pennsylvania (which conducted the project) and from national, regional, and state centers; a toll-free telephone line for consultation; and observations and demonstrations. During the project year, more than 1,000 adult educators, volunteer tutors, and professionals interested in learning differences participated in 80 training sessions, and all received the newsletter and the toll-free number to use. Training topics included the following: characteristics of learning differences; screening of information processing; assessment of learning problems; teaching reading, writing, and mathematics; multilevel classroom techniques; employment and learning problems; learning problems and English as a second language; study skills differences; test anxiety; techniques for teaching adults who learn differently; and avoidance activities and learning styles. Ninety-five percent of the participants rated the training as excellent or very good, and an external evaluator determined that the project met its goals and objectives and was well received by adult educators in Pennsylvania. (A sample copy of the newsletter is appended to the report.) (KC)

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Statewide Staff Development Project

ED 419 117

Adults with Learning Differences

by

Richard Cooper, Ph.D.

Center for Alternative Learning
6 E. Eagle Rd.
Havertown, PA 19083

Contract No. 99-7009
Contract Amount: $40,000.00

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Section 353 Abstract

Title: Statewide Staff Development: Adults with Learning Differences

Project Director Richard Cooper, Ph.D.

Agency Address Center for Alternative Learning
6 E. Eagle Rd.
Havertown, PA 19083

Federal Funding $40,000.00

Duration of Project From July 1, 1996 to June 30, 1997

Description

The staff of the Center for Alternative Learning led by Dr. Richard Cooper, its Director, operated a statewide staff development project on adults with learning differences using a variety of delivery systems. These included 1) initial training sessions, 2) advanced training sessions, 3)video tapes of training sessions, 4) the Learning disAbilities Newsletter, 5) printed material from the Center for Alternative Learning and from national, regional and state centers, 6) a toll free phone line for consultation, 8) observations and demonstrations. The project was a continuation of the 1995/96 statewide staff development project on adults with learning differences.

Objectives:

1) To operate a statewide staff development project which continues the training of 1995/96.
2. To use a variety of staff development methods to provide the training.
3. To provide training to at least 700 adult educators.
4. To conduct a minimum of 60 staff development activities.
5. To encourage the use of alternative assessments and alternative instructional techniques.
6. To develop teacher competencies in the use of innovative and alternative teaching strategies delivered by training sessions.
7. To operate the staff development project in accordance with the ABLE Guiding Principles.
8. To obtain and distribute information about adults with learning differneces from NALLD Center, universities and other national, regional and state organizations.
9. To prepare and submit a final report.

Target Audience

Adult educators, volunteer tutors, and others interested in adults with learning differences.

Product (where applicable)

A final report.

Method of Evaluation

Internal evaluation by project participants and external evaluation by an expert in the field.

Introduction

The Statewide Staff Development Project: Adults with Learning Differences provided adult educators in Pennsylvania with a source of information about learning differences, problems and disabilities and instructional techniques which enable them to improve the programs to a group of adults who are being recognized as being among the most difficult to serve through traditional adult education delivery systems. This project brought the expertise to the local agencies rather than requiring them to attend state wide conferences.

Project Description

The Statewide Staff Development Project: Adults with Learning Differences was a continuation of the previous years' projects to provide professional development about learning differences, problems and disabilities to adult educators in Pennsylvania. The project was operated by the Center for Alternative Learning's staff which includes Dr. Richard Cooper, its founder, who has a national reputation as a leading expert in the area of adults who have learning differences and the use of alternative instructional techniques.

At both the state and national level, teaching adults with special learning needs has come to the forefront as one of the most pressing staff development needs. The National Institute for Literacy has increased its efforts to meet the needs of adults who have weak literacy skills because of learning problems. The National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center was funded by the National Institute for Literacy to find and disseminate "best practices" in the

screening and instruction of adults with learning disabilities. A number of the techniques developed by Dr. Cooper are included in the Center's Tool Kit.

At the 7th Annual NAASLN Conference (National Association for Adults with Special Learning Needs), William Langner, the association's President, stated that the lifelong education of adults with disabilities is not just the responsibility of adult education. He believes that, when the various government departments and the non government agencies pull their resources and collaborate, a truly effective system to provide lifelong learning can be developed. Mr. Langner states that the U.S. Department of Education finds that approximately 40% of children with disabilities do not complete high school. These children grow up to enter the ranks of the undereducated and under- or unemployed. Many of these individuals with disabilities enter adult education programs.

Improving the skills of individuals with learning problems is not just a problem in this country. Mr. Langner and Dr. Cooper were part of the U.S. Observer Delegation at the Fifth International UNESCO Conference on Adult Education. One of the ten themes at the conference was Special Populations which included adults with disabilities. Although basic literacy of the majority of a country's citizens is the major focus of many nations, citizens with disabilities and individuals with learning disabilities are receiving increasing attention in the developed countries.

Goals

1. To build on the model for staff development which was begun in the 1995/96 academic year which provides staff development through a number of delivery systems.

2. To provide the adult educators in Pennsylvania with a wide range of staff development activities and instructional strategies for teaching students with learning differences.

3. To facilitate the flow of information from national, regional and state information centers to adult education providers in Pennsylvania.

Objectives

1. To operate a statewide staff development project (in each of the six regional professional development centers) which continues the training for adult educators provided in the 1995/96 staff development projects.

2. To use a variety of staff development methods (training sessions, video recordings, printed material, classroom demonstrations and observations, 800 toll free hot line, newsletter, fax and E-mail) to achieve the competencies for adult educators identified by the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education.

3. To provide training to at least 150 adult educators who did not participate in the previous year's project and to provide advanced training to at least 550 adult educators.

4. To conduct a minimum of 60 staff development activities (training sessions, demonstrations, consultations and observations) in the regional staff development centers and adult education agencies throughout the state.

5. To encourage the learning about and the development of instructional strategies and techniques matched to the individual's learning differences rather than to a grade level.

6. To develop teacher competencies in the use of innovative and alternative teaching strategies delivered by training sessions.

7. To operate the staff development project incorporating the ABLE Guiding Principles for Staff Development.

8. To obtain information from the National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center, University of Kansas, Kansas State University, Penn State University and other national, regional and state centers and distribute the information to the participants of this statewide staff development project.

9. To prepare and submit a final report.

Procedures

The project began with the development of additional training topics to meet the needs expressed by participants of the 1995/96 project. Three new in-depth sessions were added to the list of training topic: In-Depth Teaching of Reading to Adults with Learning Problems, In-Depth Teaching of Math to Adults with Learning Problems and In-Depth Training of the Cooper Screening for Information Processing. The regional Professional Development Centers were contacted and encouraged to schedule training in their regions.

80 training activities were conducted as part of the 1996/97 project. Dr. Cooper traveled throughout the state conducting training at meetings organized by the Professional Development Centers or at local agencies' meetings. A number of training activities also took place at the Center for Alternative Learning. These included training sessions and demonstrations of assessment and instructional techniques to adult educators who came to the Center to observe.

A video tape was sent to each of the Professional Development Centers on the Characteristics of Learning Differences. The coordinators were encouraged to have individuals, who had not attended previous training, view the video tape before attending training on other topics. A number of adult educators took advantage of viewing the video tape and reported that it prepared them to attend other training sessions. However, not all adult

educators who attended training sessions viewed the video because of scheduling constrains. Those who did reported that they got more out of the trainings when they had either attended the training on Characteristics or viewed the video tape.

During the project year, more than 1,000 adult educators, volunteer tutors, and professionals interested in learning differences participated in this year's training. Some attended as many as 8 training sessions while others attended only one session.

The Learning Disabilities Newsletter was sent to all who participated in the training. The mailing list of project participants for the two years has increased to more than 1400 individuals. The newsletter contains information about the Statewide Staff Development Project and the schedule of training. Additionally Dr. Cooper includes an article about learning differences or instructional techniques in each issue. (Appendix) Project participants report that the newsletter provides them with useful information and keeps the issue of dealing with adults with learning differences in their mind.

The project included a toll free number, 800-204-7667, which project participants could use to contact Dr. Cooper to request information and have questions answered. The toll free number was not used as much as anticipated but this was attributed to the Center for Alternative Learning moving from Bryn Mawr to Havertown which disrupted the phone service for three weeks in November.

At each of the training sessions, Dr. Cooper provided information about the National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center in Washington. Dr. Mary Ann Corley, the Center's Director, provided information about the Center and a form which training participants could use to place themselves on the National Center's mailing list. Since Dr. Cooper is a consultant to the University

of Kansas and Kansas State University research project on Accommodating Adults with Disabilities in Adult Education Programs, funded by the National Institute for Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR), he included information about the research project to training participants.

Training Topics

The following staff development topics were offered during the 1996/97 statewide staff development project.

Characteristics of Learning Differences This training session details how individuals with learning differences, problems and disabilities think and learn. It is the most popular of Dr. Cooper's training sessions and provides the basis for adapting instruction to meet individual needs. (A video tape of this training session is also available)

Cooper Screening of Information Processing In this training session, Dr. Cooper administers the screening to a student from the local program to demonstrate how the screening can be used as a diagnostic teaching tool. He then goes through each of the sections in the screening explaining how to administer the screening to various types of students and how to interpret the information obtained from the screening.

Assessment of Learning Problems Participants in this session learn about the many ways to assess learning problems. Sample test reports will be shown and the significance of the test scores will be discussed.

Teaching Reading, Writing and Math This training session provides an overview of alternative techniques for teaching reading, writing and math to individuals with learning problems.

Tic Tac Toe Math The Tic Tac Toe Math system has proven to be very effective with individuals with learning differences. Many adult students have attributed their success with passing the math section of the GED to Tic Tac Toe Math. This training teaches the system and demonstrates how to teach it to students who have not been able to memorize the times tables.

Teaching Math to Adults with Learning Problems This training session provides information about why individuals with learning differences have difficulty learning math. Alternative techniques for teaching quantitative concepts, arithmetic operations and problem solving skills are explained. A demonstration of Tic Tac Toe Math is included.

Teaching Reading to Adults with Learning Problems Literacy teachers and tutors report that this training provides them with many practical ideas for teaching individuals with reading problems from the non-reader to the reader with limited comprehension.

Teaching Spelling and Writing to Adults with Learning Problems This training session provides alternative techniques for teaching spelling and writing to individuals with language based learning problems.

Teaching Adults with Low Level Literacy and Numeracy Skills. This training session is designed for adult educators and literacy tutors who are working with

adults who have very low level reading and math ability. The techniques described in this training are similar to those described in other training sessions. The difference is how to adapt them to the low level students. The training will include discussion of setting realistic goals for student progress and helping students set their own realistic goals.

Multi-level Classroom Techniques This training session uses the techniques taught in the other training sessions and applies them to the multi-level classroom where adults with a wide range of basic skills are grouped together.

Employment and Learning Problems Since learning problems limit the acquisition of basic academic and social skills, adult educators need to understand how they can address employability skills in their programs. This training provides them with an understanding of the problems which individuals with learning differences encounter in the workplace and with techniques for helping them cope with the situations.

Learning Problems and English as a Second Language This training session for teachers of English as a Second Language explains how learning problems can limit second language acquisition and how to recognize if a student may need to be referred for further testing.

In-Depth Session on Teaching Reading This two day training begins by relating the characteristics of learning problems to difficulties adults have learning to read. Participants learn how various learning problems affect the reading process and the types of reading errors which are associated with the

learning problems. Techniques for teaching reading are explained and participants engage in activities using these techniques.

In-Depth Session on Teaching Writing This two day training begins by relating the characteristics of learning problems to difficulties adults have with spelling and writing. It goes beyond just learning about alternative techniques. Participants experiment with the alternative techniques. For example they are asked to draw an outline for a writing assignment and learn how to teach this technique to those who might benefit from it.

In-Depth Session on Teaching Math This two day training begins by relating the characteristics of learning problems to difficulties adults encounter with math. Participants receive training in alternative instructional techniques, including Tic Tac Toe Math, and have an opportunity to practice using the techniques. Topics include developing quantitative concepts, improving computation skills and increasing problem solving abilities.

In-Depth Session on Cooper Screening for Information Processing (C-SIP) This two day training provides the participants with an opportunity to learn about the Cooper Screening for Information Processing and experiment with it. The screening is first administered to an adult education student or a volunteer from the audience. Participants then practice administrating the screening on each other and learn how to interpret the results.

If They Think Differently, Shouldn't They Study Differently This training session explores how learning differences impact on study skills. Alternative study skills, those which individuals with various learning problems have found

useful, will be demonstrated and discussed. Participants will receive copies of study aids which enable students to become more efficient and effective at studying.

Helping Students with Test Anxiety Test anxiety is a problem for many students with learning differences. This training session demonstrates a variety of techniques to help students prepare for and take tests. These include learning how to teach students relaxation and study skills and when to implement accommodations. Techniques for analyzing test taking problems will also be demonstrated.

Techniques for Teaching Adults Who Learn Differently This training provides 25 teaching principles which Dr. Cooper has found effective when working with individuals with learning problems.

Avoidance Activities and Learning Styles This training explores the reasons why so many individuals with learning differences avoid the very tasks they say they want to do. Participants learn how to identify avoidance behaviors and are provided with suggestions about what they can do to help students break avoidance patterns.

Objectives Which Were Met

All the objectives of the Statewide Staff Development Project were met or exceeded.

1. The 1996/97 statewide staff development project continued the training for adult educators in each of the six regional professional development

centers by offering the orientation training on the Characteristics of Learning Differences and follow-up training sessions on how to teach adults with learning differences.

2. This year's project used a variety of staff development methods including primarily training sessions, printed material, the Learning disAbilities Newsletter and classroom demonstrations and observations. A video recording of the orientation training on the Characteristics of Learning Differences was sent to each of the six Professional Development Centers and was viewed by many adult educators, especially in the rural areas of the state. One training session was conducted by teleconference to four sites in the Northeast section of the state. The 800 toll free hot line was also utilized by some adult educators, however, not to the level anticipated.

3. The number of adult educators who participated in the statewide staff development far exceeded the projected number of at least 150 adult educators who did not participate in the previous year's project and to provide advanced training to at least 350 adult educators. The attendance in this year's project activities was 1,238 teachers, tutors, counselors and administrators.

4. The demand for training also far exceeded the projected number of training sessions. Instead of 50 staff development activities (training sessions, demonstrations, consultations and observations) there were 80 training sessions, 5 of which included demonstrations and 2 were observations of assessment techniques used at the Center for Alternative Learning.

5. The content of most of the training sessions was instructional strategies and techniques which are matched to the individual's learning differences rather than to a grade level. Participants learned how to identify learning differences and teaching techniques which Dr. Cooper has found to be effective when instructing adults who learn differently.

6. Teachers reported that the follow-up and in-depth training sessions provided them with the competencies they needed to use the innovative and alternative teaching strategies delivered by the training sessions.

7. The 1996/97 the staff development project was operated in accordance with the ABLE Guiding Principles for Staff Development.

8. Each project participant was provided with information from the National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center. Adult educators were encouraged to place their names on the national Center's mailing list and were provided with a form which they could complete and send to the Center. Since Dr. Cooper serves as a consultant to projects operated by the University of Kansas and Kansas State University, he incorporated the latest information from those institutions into the Pennsylvania statewide staff development project's training sessions along with material from other national, regional and state centers.

9. The final report was prepared and submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult and Literacy Education.

Objectives Which Were Not Met

Although all the objectives were met, the second objective of the project to offer a variety of delivery systems anticipated that adult educators would contact Dr. Cooper by phone or E-mail to ask questions about their students and instructional techniques. Some project participants used the 800 toll free hot phone line but not as many as anticipated. This was partially the result of the increased number of training sessions which limited the need to request information by phone and partially because the Center for Alternative Learning moved from Bryn Mawr to Havertown during the project year and phone service

was disrupted for three weeks. The move also disrupted the Center's ability to use E-mail so its use was not encouraged during this year's project.

Evaluation

Each participant at each of the training sessions was encouraged to complete an evaluation and most did so. On these individual evaluations, an overwhelming 95% rated the training as excellent or very good. Additional comments on the evaluations included: "very practical information, can be used immediately." The external evaluator, Lorainne Miley, who attended one of the training sessions and reviewed the evaluations from the other training sessions, stated the project met its goals and objectives and was well received by adult educators in Pennsylvania.

Dissemination

The information about this 353 training project is reported in the Learning disAbilities Newsletter which is distributed nationally. The project report will be available to adult educators in Pennsylvania through AdvancE and the Western Pennsylvania Resource Center. Information about the project is included in the presentations that Dr. Cooper makes at state and national conferences. Adult educators in a number of states have contacted Dr. Cooper to request information about the Statewide Staff Development project for possible replication in other parts of the country.

Appendix

Sample Copy of the
Learning disAbilities Newsletter
Vol. 14 No. 3 March 1997

LEARNING disABILITIES
-- NEWSLETTER --

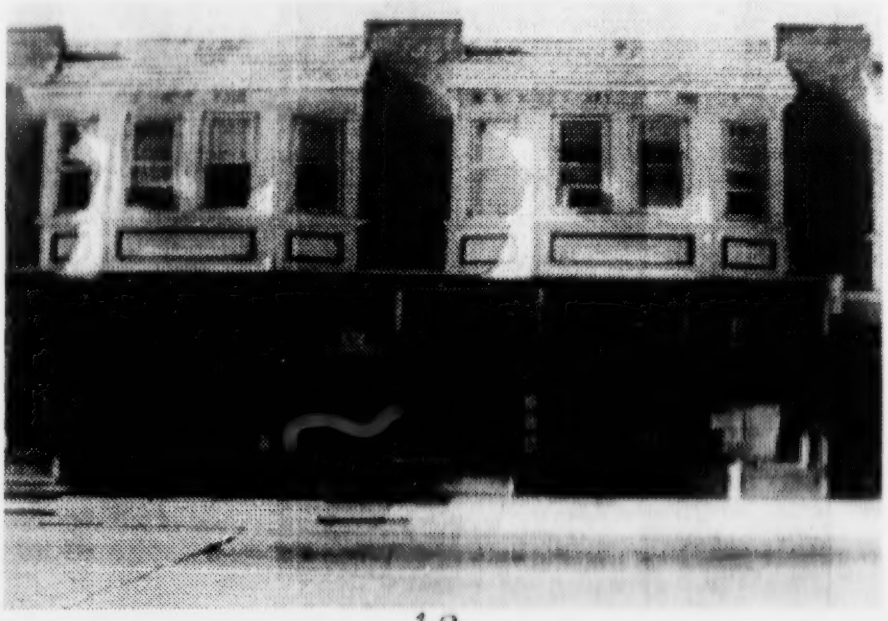
Center for Alternative Learning
6 East Eagle Rd.
Havertown, PA 19083
610-446-6126

Vol. 14 No. 3 March, 1997

Havertown Office

As we reported in the last issue, January 24th was the official opening of the new office and learning facility at 6 E. Eagle Road in Havertown, Pennsylvania. Anne-Louise and Richard Cooper welcomed students, parents, community leaders and local business people to tour the new facility. Although there is still work to complete, the office and learning center are operational. A second classroom and a storage room remain under construction. We expect to complete them by May. For those of you who do not live close enough to visit our facility, here is a photograph of the front of our building. It is two store-fronts, double doors on each side and two apartments above the stores.

The left side houses our computer lab, the Center's classroom, a storage room and Dr. Cooper's office. The walls in the basement on this side still have the shelves from the 5 & 10 which used to serve the community. We have filled them with boxes of things from the old office, most of which we have not been able to go through yet. Part of this basement is also a work space for the materials produced by Learning disAbilities Resources.

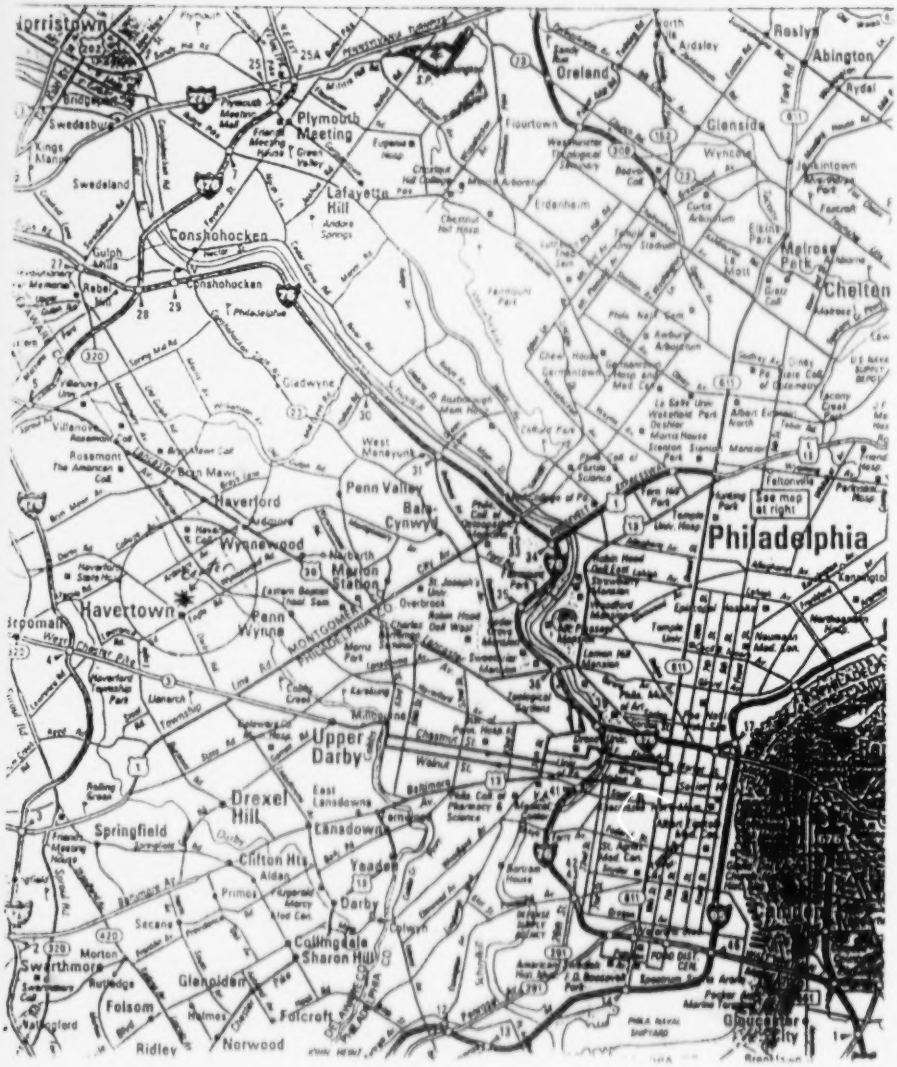


4 & 6 East Eagle Rd.

The corner of Eagle and Darby Roads

The Oakmont Section of Havertown in Haverford Township

Delaware County Pennsylvania



The doors on the right side we use as the main entrance. The front contains a display area of LDR materials, restrooms are in the back and the rest of the first floor contains Anne-Louise's office and the production and shipping area for LDR. The basement on this side, which was used as a craft center, will be finished and used as a second classroom and library for our adult education program

Our new classroom, which will be used for adult education classes, teacher and tutor training sessions and community education, can comfortably accommodate 25 students. Dr Cooper has already conducted two seminars at the Center which were open to the local community. He plans to offer seminars and classes on a monthly basis.

The Center is located one block from SEPTA 103 & 115 bus stop. There is a large metered parking lot a half a block behind our office on Darby Road.

Speaking Schedule

Learning Abilities and Disabilities Southeastern Pennsylvania Even State Staff Development, Exton, PA, March 21, 10:30 to 2:30

Teaching Adults with Weak Math Skills, offered at three community colleges across the state of North Carolina, April 22, 23 & 24.

Teaching Math to Students with Learning Problems, Montgomery County Intermediate Unit, 15 hour, one credit course, March 4, 6, 18 & 20, 4:30 to 8:30.

Teaching Math to Students with Learning Problems, Delaware County Intermediate Unit, 15 hour, one credit course, July 21 & 23, 8:30 to 4:00.

Topics to be announced. Kansas Adult Education Summer Institute, Manhattan, KS, July 10 & 11.

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The Newsletter is published 5 times a year.

Pennsylvania's Statewide Staff Development Project

Dr. Cooper continues to crisscross the state providing training at the Professional Development Centers and adult education agencies. He has completed 48 training sessions to date this academic year as part of this project. This included three in Spanish. In December and in February, he offered training to Spanish speaking adult education students and teachers the the American Hispanic Center in Harrisburg. 723 adult educators have participated in the project so far this year.

Statewide Staff Development Schedule

The following is a list of the training sessions which are already scheduled for the up-coming months.

March 24	Centre Co. Vo-Tech *Innovative Instructional Techniques for Reading, Comprehension, Writing and Spelling*	Pleasant Gap 6:30 to 9:00
March 25	Mansfield University Adult Education *Innovative Instructional Techniques for Reading and Writing*	Mansfield 6:00 to 8:30
March 26	Center for Alternative Learning *Teaching Reading to Adults with Learning Problems*	Havertown 6:00 to 8:30
April 1	Intermediate Unit # 4 *If They Learn Differently, Shouldn't They Study Differently*	Grove City 5:30 to 9:00
April 2	Intermediate Unit # 9 *If They Learn Differently, Shouldn't They Study Differently*	Smethport 5:30 to 9:00
April 3	Grove City Literacy Council *Tic Tac Toe Math*	*Grove City* 5:30 to 8:30
April 4	Northwest Professional Development Center *In-Depth Session on Writing*	Erie 9:00 to 3:00
April 5	JCCEOA *Techniques for Teaching Adults (Part II)*	Punxsutawney 9:00 to 12:00
April 8	Southeast Professional Development Center *Characteristics of Learning Problems*	Lancaster 6:00 to 9:00
April 10	Crawford Literacy Council *Techniques for Teaching Adults with Learning Problems*	Meadville 5:00 to 8:00
April 11	5th Annual Inter-Regional Conference *Assessment of Learning Problems*	Sharon 9:30 to 10:45

April 15	YWCA Literacy Program *Techniques for Teaching Adults with Learning Problems*	Pottstown 7:00 to 9:00
April 16	Pen Argyl/Bangor Adult Education *Teaching Spelling and Writing to Adults*	Bangor 7:00 to 9:00
April 17	Harrisburg State Hospital *Teaching Writing to Adults with Learning Problems*	Harrisburg 10:00 to 12:00
April 17	Harrisburg State Hospital *Cooper Screening of Information Processing*	Harrisburg 1:00 to 4:00
April 17	ARIN Adult Education *If They Learn Differently, Shouldn't They Study Differently*	Indiana 7:30 to 8:30
April 18	Bedford Co. Adult Education *Tic Tac Toe Math*	Bedford 1:00 to 4:00
April 29	Somerset Co. AVTS *Characteristics of Learning Differences*	Somerset 12:00 to 4:00
April 30	Hiram G. Andrews Center *Characteristics of Learning Differences*	Johnstown 9:00 to 3:00
May 1	Community Action *Teaching Math and Study Skills*	Waynesburg 9:00 to 3:00
May 2	State Correction Institution, Greene *Multi-Level Teaching Techniques*	Waynesburg 9:00 to 3:00
May 7	Central Susquehanna-IU *Innovative Instructional Techniques*	Montandon 11:00 to 3:00
May 14	Lackawanna Jr. College *To be announced*	Scranton 6:00 to 9:00
May 22	Carbon Co. Area Vo-Tech *Innovative Instructional Techniques for Reading, Comprehension, Writing and Spelling*	Jim Thorpe 6:30 to 9:00

In late April or May, the Central-Northeast Professional Development Center is planning a Saturday morning training session at distance learning classrooms at several locations in the region. More details will be provided in the next newsletter.

For more information about any of the training sessions listed above, call the Center for Alternative Learning or the regional Professional Development Centers.

These training sessions are funded through a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education.

Auditory Perception

Individuals who have problems with auditory perception are not able to distinguish between subtle sounds in language. This blurred hearing means that a person is not able to distinguish between the subtle differences in the tone of the sounds or distinguish two sounds which occur close together in time. Sounds which are very different such as a dog's bark or a cat's meow are distinguishable but not the difference between "b" and "v" or "s" and "x". Words which are pronounced slowly and clearly spread out the time between the sounds in those words and therefore are recognizable. But, during normal speech, the distinction between those sounds may disappear for the person with blurred hearing. This problem can cause difficulty in many areas of functioning but mainly in language, since language is made up of many subtle sounds which occur close in time. For the individuals who have difficulty distinguishing the sounds in language, communication is problematic in a number of ways. These include understanding spoken language, speaking, reading and even thinking.

Imagine a student in a classroom hearing a teacher say "the class is boys are rough" everyone else heard "the class is boisterous" because they heard it correctly. The student who heard "boys are rough" either made no sense out of the comment or is embarrassed and confused.

If a person does not hear a word correctly then it is difficult to reproduce it in speech. Therefore, many words, especially those which are large or multi-syllabic, are mispronounced by individuals who have poor auditory perception. Since a common response to a mispronounced word is laughter, the person who has difficulty pronouncing words tends to use simpler vocabulary rather than being embarrassed. Many adults report that they do not interact much because of their difficulty with language.

When a person with blurred hearing mishears a word, he/she would rather guess than ask. It is less embarrassing and over time many have learned that people become irritated by the constant asking for clarification.

But the limited vocabulary has an even more profound effect on individuals with auditory perception problems. From birth, children who do not distinguish subtle sounds are at a disadvantage; their vocabulary will lag behind others. In early childhood, language development is assisted by the other senses, especially vision. When a child hears someone say "rattle", the meaning of the word is clear and verifiable by sight. Most of the early language development is naming concrete things. But as a child gets older, abstract terms become an ever increasing aspect of their vocabulary. Individuals who do not distinguish the subtle sounds in words may not know what word is being used. If the term is not concrete, the person may not be able to know what is referred to. The more abstract the terms used, the more likely that the person with auditory perception problems will not understand and not be able to increase the vocabulary. Besides communicating with language, we use language to think. We can think about concrete things without the words which name them by visualizing them, but the abstract concepts need terms or words to enable us to think about them. Without abstract language, individuals remain concrete thinkers, limiting their higher order thinking skills including problem solving and critical thinking skills.

How can individuals with auditory perception problems be helped? As with all the problems caused by learning and thinking differently, the first thing is to understand

that they do not distinguish sounds clearly. Since most people have difficulty understanding how they perceive anything differently, they need to be shown examples. By pronouncing words slowly and articulating with exaggeration, you can help the person to hear words in a way closer to what others hear. Recording words which the individual has difficulty hearing onto a tape recorder enables the person to hear the words pronounced clearly and tunes the person in to the subtle sounds which he/she does not normally hear.

Because many individuals with limited vocabulary are concrete thinkers they need many examples, analogies and illustrations to help them understand abstract concepts. When they are studying any subject, they should find as many visual aids as possible and, if there are none, have someone help them to develop an analogy to illustrate the concepts. Vocabulary development is essential. Students should collect words and study them daily.

Richard Cooper

Comprehension Companion

Individuals with various learning problems often need assistive devises or tools to enhance their learning. One such tool it the Comprehension Companion Bookmark which Dr. Cooper made for some of his students. He found it to be a very effective way to help students with certain learning differences improve their reading comprehension. This bookmark is a tool for learning for individuals who have a racing mind, problems with organization, difficulty writing or spelling, and weak memories for written material. They use this bookmark to compensate for some of their problems with reading comprehension and notetaking.

The Comprehension Companion Bookmark is helpful to students in different ways. It provides a running record of the ideas from the reading material for those with weak memories. The Comprehension Companion, since it is a bookmark, stays where the student needs it, aiding those with poor organization skills who often cannot find their things. The Comprehension Companion Bookmark focuses the individual's thoughts on the basic components when reading. This helps them to remember to capture the detail. Those with a racing mine frequently have limited reading comprehension because their minds are flooded with many extraneous thoughts while reading. These added thoughts dilute the person's comprehension. We have enclosed a copy of the Comprehension Companion bookmark with the mailing of this newsletter. It comes in tablet form. The student tears off a page, writes the title or abbreviates it, writes the page number where he/she begins to read. As the person reads, he/she takes notes by answering the questions. Students with poor writing or spelling skills are encouraged to make their notes with abbreviations, simple pictures, or diagrams rather than words.

-- Remember to mark your calendar for the National Association for Adults with Special Learning Needs Annual Conference, September 18, 19 and 20, 1997 in San Diego, California. For more information about the conference, you can also call Jan Godfrey in San Diego at 619-691-5836 or Dr. Cooper at 610-446-6126.